

THE ADOLPHI THEATRE.—The new drama here, called "The Queen's Secret, or the Iron Mask," has three pretty scenes,—an inn on the borders of the Forest of Fontainebleau; the Chateau of Fontainebleau (that rendezvous of palaces); and the Monastery of Lerins, in the Island of St. Honorat. The piece, founded on a well-known mysterious passage in French history, is mainly dependant on the acting of Madame Celeste and Mr. Webster, well supported, however, by Miss Woolgar and Paul Bedford. The versatility of Mr. Webster as an actor is very extraordinary: he can play anything,—from Richard III. to harlequin: the rough countryman, the West-end fop, the stern old Puritan, the Paris *fleur-de-lis*, find in him an equally efficient representative.

THE LONGEST SHIP. BEATEN AGAIN.—Under the heading "The Longest Ship in the World" our contemporaries have mentioned that Messrs. Mare, shipbuilders, of Blackwall, and Messrs. Penn, of Greenwich, engineers, have taken a contract to construct, for the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, an iron steam-ship, of the following dimensions and power, viz.:—Length between the perpendiculars, 325 feet; breadth of beam, 43 feet; depth, 32 feet. She will measure about 3,000 tons, and will be propelled by four engines of the collective working power of 1,200 horses; will have feathering paddle-wheels, and a guaranteed average speed of 14 knots, equal to 16 statute miles per hour. Some idea may be formed of the size of this gigantic vessel when it is compared with that of some of the existing steam-ships most celebrated for their large size. She will be 51 feet longer than the *Great Britain*; 60 feet longer than the largest of the Cunard or North American mail steamers, the *Asia* and *Africa*; 40 feet longer than the large steamers, such as the *Panama*, *Oronoco*, &c., now constructing for the Royal Mail Company; and 100 feet longer, and 500 tons larger, than the *Caledonia*, first-rate, of 120 guns. Strange to say, however, the Americans have beaten this by anticipation. The steamer *Elipse*, now on the stocks at Louisville, Kentucky, is to be three hundred and fifty-nine feet in length. She is to have eight of the largest sized boilers, and her water wheel will be 42 feet in diameter. She will be completed in the fall.

SOLID GAS.—Baron Liebig speaks of the combustion of gas as one of the greatest wants of the age. Coal does contain an immense quantity of it in a solid state, and yields abundance of it in the fluid form of naphtha; but coal may rather be said to yield the gas than even to contain it, far less to be it in a solid state. Mr. Young, of Manchester, however, is said to have discovered a process by which, besides liquid oil or naphtha, he procures the solid paraffine—a substance which, it is said, had never before been produced from coal, though wood has heretofore yielded it. This paraffine, when heated, becomes olefant gas—the illuminating principle of ordinary gas light,—so that it is in reality the solid gas required. The essential point of cost may perhaps thus be brought within the limits of practical purposes. The process is said to be quite simple. The coal introduced at one end of a retort is screwed out in the form of coke at the other, while the liquid and solid products of distillation come away from a separate opening. If successfully carried out on a large scale, Mr. Young's process will yield important results, and among these may be specified the economical production of coke for our railways as well as of gas for our dwellings.

MODERN BALLOONING.—In lately reproaching the stupid abuses, mountebankism, and sometimes something worse, into which ballooning has fallen, we scarcely expected to be supported so soon by one of the "balloonists" themselves, as he very significantly dubs them. A young artist, one of a party of four, whom we happened to see tumbling down into Fulham in a flimsy article, to what appeared, to themselves as well as to all who witnessed the exhibition, to be certain destruction, cleverly and coolly obviated, however, the very next moment, by one of the exhibitors, who converted the collapsing bag into a parachute by

cutting away the attachments of the neck beneath,—describing the circumstances in the daily papers, says:—"I am too sensible of the mischievous folly of which I and my brother balloonists have been guilty, to let this opportunity pass without recording my humble, but solemn protest against the whole system of ballooning as at present existing. If any beneficial result was to be looked for—if any scientific ends were to be gained by balloon ascents, I should be silent; but it is madness and folly to permit any enthusiast or any charlatan who may be the possessor of a silk bag which he can afford to fill with coal gas, to risk his own life among the clouds, as well as those of the madcaps who are with him, for the amusement of some hundreds of *gobemouches* who have paid a shilling a-head to see their fellow-creatures commit constructive suicide. When some personage more important than a poor caricaturist has been killed in a balloon, the attention of the authorities will perhaps be drawn to the subject, and this wanton trifling with life be perhaps put a stop to, like any other dangerous nuisance."

FALL OF A FLOOR AT BALLYCLARE.—The flooring of a large loft in an old paper-mill here gave way last week, while upwards of 500 persons were assembled at a lecture on "electro-biology," and three lives were lost in consequence, and twenty-six persons seriously injured. The flooring consisted of heavy 3-inch planks, running transversely to the direction of the beam, supported at one end by the side-walls where it was let into the stonework, and at the other end by the beam, along the top of which the planks met from either side, and to which they were fastened by long iron bolts. The accident was occasioned by the breaking of the beam exactly in the centre, at a moment when a rush had been made thither to witness some experiment, and when it gave away, the flooring shelved downwards from both sides, sliding, as it were, those who stood upon it into the store below. In some places the planks prised up the masonry into which they were inserted, and in one spot a considerable mass of stone and brickwork was detached, which, falling upon the living heap below, caused the most fatal of the injuries recorded. Such cases—and this is not the first of late, even in Ireland—show the necessity of inquiry and examination as to the sufficiency of places of public resort to sustain the probable pressure under every contingency. It is the duty of local authorities even more than of lecturers to see to this.

COLOUR-BOXES AND DRAWING INSTRUMENTS.—The Council of the Society of Arts, wishing still further to prosecute their efforts in bringing a knowledge of drawing within the reach of artisans and others, and feeling convinced that the present high price of the necessary materials is a serious drawback to the attainment of that end, have determined to present the Society's large medal to the person who shall produce the box having the greatest number of the best colours for general use, and brushes, which may be sold retail for One Shilling. The Council will be prepared to purchase not less than one thousand of the successful boxes. The Council further offer the Society's large medal for the best and cheapest set of "drawing instruments," and will be prepared to purchase not less than one hundred sets of the successful case.

THE STATUE IN CAVENDISH-SQUARE TO LORD GEORGE BENTINCK.—On Saturday last, at the vestry of St. Marylebone, a report was presented from a committee appointed, as to the making of two crossings from Holles-street to the garden in the centre of Cavendish-square, that the present crossing and gate might be removed from the centre, so as not to interfere with the statue of the late Lord George Bentinck now about to be erected there,—the inhabitants of the square or parties applying for the change agreeing to pay the cost of alteration themselves. The report was adopted.

WORSLEY HALL.—An illustration of Worsley Hall, at which her Majesty means to rest on her visit to Manchester on 10th proximo, will be found in the eighth volume of *THE BUILDER*, page 270.

THE SUB-MARINE TELEGRAPH.—The line, as now being manufactured, is described as consisting of four copper wires of the thickness of an ordinary bell-wire, cased in gutta serena, and twined with a corresponding number of hamper strands steeped in a mixture of tar and tallow into a rope of about an inch diameter. Another strand similarly prepared is wound transversely round this, and finally ten wires of galvanized iron, about a third of an inch thick, are twined round this central core and form a solid and at the same time flexible casing. The whole, when thus completed, has the appearance of an ordinary 1½-inch metallic cable. A huge coil is being formed in one continuous piece at the rate of about 1½ miles a day, and will finally attain the length of 24 miles.

THE EARTHQUAKE AT NAPLES.—An *Official Gazette* of the two Sicilies gives a detailed account of the disasters caused throughout the kingdom of Naples by the earthquake of 14th ult. The Principato Ultriore was severely visited, particularly in the districts of Carbonara, Lacedonia, Gallura, and Monteverde. At Bovino, Ascoli, Lucera, and Sansevero, and other places of Capitanata, most of the houses were seriously injured. In the province of Bari, the town of Canosa has suffered most: 376 houses are in a tottering condition: two churches, the town-house, and the arch of Diomedes, have been considerably damaged. But the scourge was most severely felt in the province of Basilicata, its effects being chiefly concentrated around the *Vulture*, where the motion lasted sixty seconds; and, according to the account, it had not quite ceased by last advice. One-half of Venosa had been destroyed. At Ruvo, fifty-two dead bodies had been dug out of ruins on 16th; at Bari 100; and the town of Melfi, containing 10,000 inhabitants, is a heap of ruins: 700 persons lost their lives there, and upwards of 200 are severely bruised and wounded. The village of Barile actually disappeared. The Neapolitan government have given directions for the prompt reconstruction of the fallen houses, and advanced sums for the purpose. The houses that are in a tottering condition, but may still be saved, have been propped up; those that threaten ruin are in course of demolition. Meantime barracks have been constructed for the houseless population, and four government engineers are directing the labours now in progress for repairing the immense damage done.

THE TEMPLE CHURCH.—On going to visit the Temple Church the other day with some country friends, says the *John Bull*, we were much disappointed at finding the door closed. We now gather, however, from a correspondent of the *Morning Chronicle*, that a sort of half welcome is given after all to those who are fortunate enough to be initiated in the "Open Sesame" of this ancient abode of the Knights Templars, which consists in simply knocking at the door. It is to be regretted that the solution of the mystery of admission is not announced by a slip of paper on the door inscribed with the word "knock."

VENEZIAN BLINDS.—Cast-iron is said to be coming into use for common Venetian blinds. We have sometimes thought that good, stout, unadorned iron might be economically cut into slips for such blinds. The *Mechanic's Magazine* says, that a Mr. Burt makes laths of iron or metal, embossed, corrugated, or simply curved, perforated and painted or japanned, according to taste. He also claims an arrangement for raising and lowering such blinds, and preserving the parallelism of the laths, without the multiplicity of cords generally employed.

WAGES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.—Returns showing average wages of mechanics and others in South Australia, for quarter ending 31st December, 1850.—Blacksmiths, 9s. per day, without board or lodging; bricklayers, 7s. to 7s. 6d., ditto; brickmakers, per 1,000, 10s. to 13s., ditto; carriage makers, 7s. per day, ditto; coopers, 6s. to 7s., ditto; day labourers, 4s. per day, ditto; wheelwrights, 6s. to 6s. 6d., ditto; miners, tributaries, according to agreement; boys, 6d. to 1s., with board and lodging; shipwrights, 8s. to 9s. per day, without board or lodging.—*Adelaide Observer*.